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Pattern of conferences

Career development in language services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the overall context of the Secretary-General's strategy for the management of human resources of the Organization, the purpose of career development is to build and maintain a highly competent, multi-skilled and versatile international civil service capable of meeting the Organization's present and future needs and to meet the development needs and career aspirations of individual staff members. Accordingly, career development prospects should be considered in a broad sense, not only in terms of promotion opportunities, but also in terms of the potential offered to the staff for broadening their professional experience and having access to development opportunities. The promotion possibilities for language staff at the P-3 and P-4 levels vary according to their function and the size of the organizational unit to which they are assigned. While opportunities for reaching the P-5 level in language services also vary, they are, overall, limited. In addition to the creation or the upgrading of posts, a number of non-budgetary measures can be taken to address problems which language service staff may face in relation to their career development, including measures aimed at increased mobility between language functions and between duty stations; improving training facilities; and moving towards a global administration of conference services staffing tables at all duty stations. The following is proposed: to undertake a comprehensive review of post gradings in the context of the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002–2003; to continue the new experience of holding common examinations for the recruitment of staff for written language functions; to pursue consultations on the modalities for establishing a limited system of managed reassignment to duty stations away from Headquarters; and to initiate discussions at the senior level on the feasibility of a more coordinated administration of staffing tables for language services at various duty stations.

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I. Introduction

1. By paragraph 29 of its resolution 53/208 B of 18 December 1998, the General Assembly expressed regret for the difficulties being faced by language service staff in relation to their career development. In paragraph 30 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-third session analysing such problems as may exist related to career development in language services and taking into account the fact that the numbers and grade levels of staff should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization as well as the fact that requirements differ between languages as well as between duty stations. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management (A/53/342), the purpose of career development is to build and maintain a highly competent, multi-skilled and versatile international civil service capable of meeting the Organization's present and future needs and, in so doing, to meet the development needs and career aspirations of individual staff members. The Organization's career development policy is founded on the principle that responsibility for career development is shared: by the Organization, which must provide structural support and a framework of opportunities; by managers, who must support their staff's development and career progress; and by staff members, who must be committed to continuous professional growth. Accordingly, career development should not be equated solely with the existence of promotion opportunities. Although the latter constitutes one element, such factors as potential for broadening of professional experience and access to training and development opportunities should also be considered.

3. A United Nations staff member who enters the Professional category at the P-2 or P-3 level, in most cases after passing an examination, may, in the course of a career, aspire to two or three promotions and some reassignments, which may or may not involve relocation, as well as a number of meaningful training or retraining opportunities. A staff member following such a pattern could be considered to have had a satisfactory career. On that basis, a review of career development in language services entails a comparison between language staff and the staff of the Secretariat at large in terms of possibilities for their careers to follow such a pattern, which should be viewed not as a desirable statistical average, but as a possible goal for a staff member at the beginning of his or her professional career.

4. Consistent with that approach, the present report provides an analysis of the current staffing table situation and grade structure at the three larger conference centres of the United Nations (New York, Geneva and Vienna) and at other duty stations with smaller language units (Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago). Based on the findings derived from that analysis, the report then focuses on possible solutions to the current problems relating to promotion prospects and to other aspects of career development in language services.

II. Analysis of current staffing table situation and grade structure

5. The overwhelming majority of the language staff join the Organization at the P-2 or P-3 level after passing a competitive examination. This is the case for translators, editors, interpreters, verbatim reporters and copy preparers. Editorial assistants and language reference assistants, who are recruited against General Service posts at the Principal level through an examination open to staff members in the General Service category, could also be considered as language staff, but their career development follows an entirely different pattern, since for them any promotion beyond the G-7 level necessarily implies passing another examination, either the competitive examination for the recruitment of the language staff mentioned above or the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category from other categories ("G to P") examination. For the purpose of the present analysis, the focus will therefore be exclusively on staff in the Professional category.

6. The first step in the career development of Professional staff members in language services is promotion to the P-3 level following two years of in-service training. In that respect, their situation compares favourably with that of staff in other professional groups, to the extent that, in most cases, staff are recruited at the P-2 level and automatically promoted to P-3 after two years of service, subject to satisfactory performance during that trial period, which only rarely is extended to three years. The fact that interpreters are recruited at the P-3 level has resulted in a marked decrease in the number of P-2 posts authorized for language services over the past few bienniums at all duty stations through upgradings or abolitions, as administratively, it is more practical to place new recruits against P-3 posts.

7. Possibilities of promotion to the P-4 level, measured by the ratio of P-4 posts to P-3 posts, provide another indicator of career prospects. A ratio equal to or exceeding one P-4 to one P-3 within the organizational unit, which

corresponds roughly to the overall ratio for regular budget posts in the entire Secretariat, is considered to be satisfactory. The situation was first reviewed at the three conference centres covered under section 1B of the budget, General Assembly affairs and conference services (A/52/6/Rev.1), and then at the smaller language units at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (which is also a United Nations conference centre) and in the regional commissions. At the three larger conference centres, the picture is mixed as indicated in table 1 below. Prima facie, it would appear that, at least for interpreters, the number of P-4 posts is adequate, with ratios of 225 per cent, 357 per cent and 433 per cent at New York, Geneva and Vienna, respectively. These high percentages point to the fact that the majority of interpreters are expected to carry out their functions at the P-4 level once they have acquired sufficient experience. However, some disparities between languages exist. The ratio of P-4 to P-5 posts is lower for the Chinese and the Russian languages as a belated consequence of the rotation system that existed for Chinese and Russian language staff until 1990–1991. Since such staff formerly left the Organization after five years of service, a number of senior posts in the corresponding interpretation sections were released to accommodate promotions of staff in the other sections. Now that the career paths are the same for all interpreters, these disparities are an anomaly and are resented by the staff concerned. It should be noted that, despite the above, the ratio of P-4 to P-3 posts exceeds 100 per cent in all cases.

8. With regard to translators, the overall ratio, although less markedly above the Secretariat average, can still be considered as acceptable. The ratios for New York, Geneva and Vienna are 128 per cent, 91 per cent and 143 per cent, respectively. In Geneva and Vienna, disparities between languages exist, both as a result of the "rotation factor" described above, which has affected the Chinese and Russian translation sections at those duty stations as well, and of the abolition of vacant posts in recent bienniums, which is reflected in ratios lower than 100 per cent in the Arabic and Spanish sections at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

9. The distribution between P-4 and P-3 posts is less favourable in the case of editors, with the notable exception of the Editorial Control Section at Headquarters. In that Section, which is responsible for the editing of most of the parliamentary documentation for the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, there are eight P-4 posts and three P-3 posts which, here again, points to the fact that the experienced editor in that Section is expected to operate at the P-4 level. In the other editorial sections, ratios of P-4 to P-3 range between 42 per cent in the Official Records Editing Section and 50 per cent in the Editorial Control Unit in Vienna.

10. Finally, in the relatively small and highly specialized Verbatim Reporting Service and Copy Preparation Section at Headquarters, low ratios of P-4 to P-3 deny to the majority of the staff at the latter level any prospect of advancement unless they transfer to another functional group. With three P-4 posts and one P-5 post for a total of 18 Professionals, the grade pyramid for Copy Preparation is particularly unbalanced. With a P-4 to P-3 ratio of 25 per cent, the situation in the Verbatim Reporting Service is equally disturbing, however, because several reporters in that Service are doing revision work without recognition or compensation, and with remote prospects for promotion.

Table 1
Ratio of P-4 to P-3 at the three conference centres under section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services

Duty station/functional group	*Over 100 per cent*[a]	*50–100 per cent*	*Less than 50 per cent*
New York			
Translation	x		
Editing	x		
Official records editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Verbatim reporting			x
Copy preparation			x
Geneva			
Translation		x	
Editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Vienna			
Translation	x		
Editing		x	
Interpretation	x		

[a] The Secretariat-wide ratio of regular budget P-4 posts to P-3 posts is 105 per cent (proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/52/6/Rev.1), part I, introduction, table 7).

11. In the smaller language units at Nairobi and in the regional commissions, an analysis based on ratios of posts at different levels would be meaningless, since the very size of the units is the determining factor for career development.

To take some extreme cases, it would be absurd to draw any conclusions for the career prospects of Arabic translators at the Economic Commission for Africa from the fact that the three posts of the corresponding Translation Unit include one P-4 and two P-3s, or to note with satisfaction that the four-post French Translation Unit at the United Nations Office at Nairobi includes three P-4 posts and one P-3. Barring a dramatic increase in the staffing tables of the language units at those duty stations, which would be hard to justify on the basis of workloads and requirements, the career development of the staff assigned to those duty stations is dependent on an efficient and fair system of assignment and reassignment between Headquarters and other duty stations, which is reviewed in paragraphs 19 to 23 below.

12. The ratio of posts at the P-5/D-1 levels within a given organizational unit is also a measure of the promotion opportunities available to its staff members. A review of such ratios in the language units at the three larger conference centres has been carried out, and the related outcome is outlined in table 2 below. As in the case of the above-mentioned review concerning P-4 posts, the main dividing line retained here is the overall ratio for regular budget posts in the entire Secretariat, namely, 26 per cent.

13. At the outset, it appears from table 2 that the ratio of 26 per cent has not been exceeded in any of the language services. It has been reached in only one case, in the Interpretation Service at Headquarters. The ratios of almost 24 per cent in the Interpretation Service at Geneva and over 19 per cent in the translation services at Headquarters could be considered close enough to 26 per cent to be rated as indicative of a reasonably satisfactory situation. It is worth noting that in all cases, the size of the units warrants their classification as services headed by a manager at the D-1 level. As a corollary, the job descriptions for the P-5 posts in those units stress varied and finely honed language skills, rather than management functions, although they may include limited supervisory roles.

14. The second group includes those units with ratios in a range of 10 to 18 per cent, which is considered as indicative of mediocre prospects of promotion to the P-5 level. The Verbatim Reporting Service, which has a ratio of 14.9 per cent, comprises six separate language sections of six to eight posts, each headed by a Chief of Section who occupies the only P-5 post for that language group. The comparatively small translation and editorial sections at the United Nations Office at Vienna follow the same pattern. On the other hand, the ratio of 15.4 per cent in the translation sections at the United Nations Office at Geneva, which altogether represent a much larger number of posts, namely, 156 for all six languages combined, has been reached because, in addition to the Chiefs, each section has several senior revisers without management responsibilities which are graded at the P-5 level.

15. A third group includes those units with ratios in a range of less than 10 per cent, which is considered indicative of poor prospects of promotion to the P-5 level. In all cases, these are classified as sections and are headed by a Chief who occupies the only P-5 post. Finally, in the smaller translation and editorial units at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the regional commissions, the total absence of posts at the P-5 level, except those occupied by managers overseeing all conference services at those duty stations, means that all prospects of advancement to the P-5 level of any translator or editor, however competent, is contingent on a transfer to one of the three larger conference centres.

Table 2

Ratio of D-1/P-5 to overall Professional staff at the three conference centres under section 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services

Duty station/functional group	*18–26 per cent*[a]	*10–18 per cent*	*Less than 10 per cent*
New York			
Translation	x		
Editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Verbatim reporting		x	
Copy preparation			x
Geneva			
Translation		x	
Editing			x
Interpretation	x		
Vienna			
Translation		x	
Editing		x	
Interpretation			x

[a] The Secretariat-wide ratio of regular budget P-5/D-1 posts against Professional posts from the P-2 to D-1 level is 26 per cent (proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/52/6/Rev.1), part I, introduction, table 7).

16. It is thus apparent that the ratio of P-5/D-1 posts to the overall number of language staff at the United Nations conference centres and the ratio of P-4 to P-3 posts vary

considerably, depending on the language function and the size of the language services at the duty station considered. In the case of P-5 posts, practically all ratios are significantly lower than the statistical average for the overall Secretariat, namely, 26 per cent. Adjustments in the grade structure in some units at various duty stations appear to be fully warranted in terms of the level of the qualifications required from the incumbents. Upgradings of posts are subject to overall budgetary policy constraints, however, and difficulties are likely to subsist in smaller organizational units. Measures other than those of a budgetary nature are therefore required to enhance the career development of language staff. The four types of measures which have been considered can be outlined as follows:

(a) Facilitating transfers from one language function to the other, thus diversifying career prospects;

(b) Promoting mobility between duty stations, with a view to offering possibilities of advancement to staff located at smaller duty stations who may be at a disadvantage;

(c) Increasing training facilities for all language staff, so as to equalize chances for promotion;

(d) Undertaking a global administration of the staffing tables of the four duty stations, which would facilitate adjustments in the number and level of posts according to workload trends and staffing situations, thus reducing disparities between duty stations.

III. Possible solutions

Mobility between language functions

17. One of the difficulties encountered by language staff in the development of their careers stems from their high level of specialization, which itself limits the scope for potential career moves. For example, to date, it is unusual for an editor to switch to another written language function, such as translation, where the prospects for reaching the P-5 level are better than in editing. The reason is that the competitive examination which editors take at the start of their careers includes translation tests which are considered less stringent and comprehensive than those in the competitive examination for translators. Furthermore, in the course of the two years of the trial period, which are in fact devoted to advanced training in a given language function, opportunities to move for short periods of time to a function other than that for which the staff member was initially recruited do not exist, and as the staff member's experience in one field increases, the chances of mobility decrease.

18. In order to increase the versatility, and hence the career prospects of the staff in written language functions, an important change has been introduced in 1999 in the recruitment examination system. While, in the past, there have been separate examinations for the recruitment of translators, editors and verbatim reporters, a common examination for the three functions will take place for the first time in May 1999 for the Spanish language. The examination will have three components corresponding to the three functions, but only one overall passing mark. Recruitment from the roster will occur as and when required by the services, based on the overall ranking; given the high selectivity of the examination process, there are sufficient guarantees that successful candidates will be proficient at any of the functions. During the initial probationary period (normally two, exceptionally three years) the new recruits will receive training which will be designed so as to permit their reassignment, if warranted, based on their preference and demonstrated aptitudes. Furthermore, at periods of peak workload in either of the three services, editors, verbatim reporters or translators recruited through the common examination will be considered for reassignment to that service on a short-term basis. Finally, as they gain seniority, language staff recruited through the common exam will have the option to apply for transfers to another language service, through the normal placement procedure. Because of their broad qualifications and varied experience, their chances of being selected for a position in a different functional group will be significantly increased in comparison to the situation that has prevailed until now. It is expected that these changes in the recruitment and assignment processes will allow for more open career development for the staff in the written language functions, while providing management with more flexibility in assignments. Career prospects for staff in written language functions would also improve if they were to be offered the opportunity to train as interpreters and to sit for the interpreters examination. That kind of mobility could also increase the flexibility to assign staff to different work areas according to workload functions.

Mobility between duty stations

19. As indicated in paragraph 10 above, the career development prospects of language staff are determined to a great extent by the size of the organizational unit in which they operate. For the P-3 staff assigned to the smaller duty stations, a chance for advancement implies, in most cases,

relocation to another duty station. At the larger conference centres, such as New York, Geneva and Vienna, geographical mobility is also important for career development. For example, lateral transfers to Geneva are viewed as a desirable career move for some language staff assigned to New York. On the other hand, the comparatively lower number of P-5 posts on the staffing tables of language services at the United Nations Office at Vienna have repeatedly been cited as a cause for low morale and dissatisfaction among the staff at that duty station.

20. Staff who transfer out of a duty station have to be replaced, and difficulties have been encountered in reassigning language staff to some duty stations, particularly Nairobi and the regional commissions. Traditionally, a number of the vacancies at those duty stations have been filled through the assignment, for periods of from two to five years, of translators or editors from Headquarters who volunteer to relocate there temporarily. This empirical approach has its limitations, however, given the absence of a system of incentives and the uncertainty of reabsorption and, as a result, some junior staff have been unfairly stranded in positions with little chance of advancement, or vacancies have remained unfilled for extended periods of time.

21. A number of measures have been taken over the past years to promote mobility of language staff between duty stations. Some of them may need to be strengthened and some innovative measures are under consideration. A programme which has been in existence for many years is designed to foster exchanges of staff for periods of a few months between Headquarters, Geneva and Vienna. To the extent that peak workload periods at those duty stations do not coincide, language units experiencing peak demand for services are in a position to call on the temporary assignment of staff from another location where the permanent capacity is less strained. During their assignments to another of the three conference centres, the staff in question continue to be paid by their parent office, but travel and per diem costs are borne by the receiving office. These arrangements are made on a reciprocal basis, as the office which has received help from another during a busy period in turn releases its staff to assist the latter when a lessened workload allows it to do so. These arrangements do not affect directly advancement of the staff involved, but by broadening their experience and versatility, they increase job satisfaction and constitute an incentive for subsequent career moves involving geographical mobility.

22. In 1995, new arrangements for the assignment of translators following their recruitment were put in place, and have had a definite effect on their career development. Traditionally, after passing a competitive examination, all translators were recruited initially in New York for a two-year probationary period. It was only after completing the two years of advanced in-house training and being granted a permanent contract that some of the recruits were offered an assignment, usually for two years, at another duty station where vacancies at the P-3 level needed to be filled. For a variety of reasons, including the absence of financial incentive and the uncertainties regarding subsequent reabsorption in the corresponding translation service at Headquarters, those offers were often rejected. In 1995, a new system was set up whereby candidates for all competitive examinations are advised that, if successful, they can be appointed at any duty station in the Organization. Depending on requirements, successful candidates can therefore be immediately placed against vacant posts at offices away from Headquarters. However, these posts are loaned to conference services, Headquarters, for seven to eight months to allow for intensive training in New York of their incumbents who, upon completion of that period, proceed to their duty station. This change has had two effects: primarily, it has contributed to the prompt filling of posts at offices where the high vacancy rate was a problem, particularly at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the regional commissions. A secondary, but important, consequence is that it facilitates the rotation of translators at those duty stations, allowing for easier replacement of staff members who, after a tour of duty in the field, elect to return to Headquarters or move to another duty station for career reasons or because of personal preference.

23. In spite of these measures, cases remain where language staff, essentially translators at the P-3 level with a number of years of experience, find themselves hindered in their career development because there are no promotion prospects within their small units, and their release and integration into the corresponding translation service at Headquarters, which would offer new advancement opportunities, is delayed for lack of suitable replacements. It is in part with a view to resolving such cases that the concept of managed reassignment has been discussed. For example, language staff could be made aware in the early part of their careers of the possibility of reassignment to other duty stations for two or three years with a guarantee of being reabsorbed in their parent language service thereafter. The idea of a larger-scale reassignment scheme whereby all language staff would be rotated between Headquarters and other duty stations has been rejected, as the related administrative and relocation costs, which would be very high, would not be justified by an increase in efficiency. Contrary to what happens in other professional

groups, the experience which a language staff member might gain "in the field" does not necessarily prepare him or her for an assignment to Headquarters later on. Managed reassignment might be used only in the relatively limited number of cases where volunteers cannot be identified for temporary assignment to duty stations away from Headquarters. Discussions between the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the Office of Human Resources Management on the feasibility of such a plan are under way.

Improving training facilities

24. In language services, as in any other professional group, training is an important factor for career development, and existing training opportunities should be maintained and ideally increased. Language and technological training develops and broadens the skills of the staff, increasing versatility and job satisfaction, and management training prepares staff for the discharge of higher responsibilities. With regard to the former, in-house facilities are available and are extensively taken advantage of. At some point in their careers, most translators, interpreters and editors attend the Secretariat language classes that provide them with the opportunity to achieve proficiency in additional passive languages, and eventually to pass the United Nations language proficiency examination in those languages. Special language courses are also available in-house for those who already have an advanced knowledge of a given language, and the Programme for the Upgrading of Substantive Skills allows some of those staff to attend summer language courses at universities in countries all over the world; France, Jordan, Russia and Spain have attracted increasing numbers of United Nations language staff over the past few years. However, financing for that very popular programme is still limited. Staff at duty stations other than Headquarters have inadequate access to external language courses and even at Headquarters, full reimbursement of tuition, travel and subsistence costs is not always granted to all participants for lack of funds. Access of language staff to information technology training has also considerably developed over the past few years, in such areas as word processing, databases and, most recently, computer-assisted translation. There again, in-house resources play a major role, supplemented as necessary by outside sources.

25. Management training for language staff needs to be strengthened. It has often been noted that, contrary to the situation that may exist in other professional groups, the advancement of many language staff from P-3 to P-5 reflects not so much increased involvement in management functions as enhanced technical skills, the effect of experience and exposure to increasingly demanding challenges in the language service in which they work. As a result, some staff may be called upon rather late in their careers to carry out the responsibilities of a manager without the benefit of prior on-the-job training. The People Management Training Programme has thus been particularly useful to managers in the language services. However, there would be distinct advantages in extending it, with some adjustments, to language staff at senior levels, mostly P-5, who do not currently discharge management responsibilities, but who should be given a chance to acquire the necessary skills to be seriously considered for managerial posts in the future.

Global administration of conference services staffing tables at all duty stations

26. The review of the staffing tables of the various language services at Headquarters and away from Headquarters and the findings drawn from it (see paras. 5–15 above) show that great disparities exist according to language functions and duty stations. While the promotion prospects of translators and interpreters in New York and Geneva can be considered reasonably satisfactory, the situation in those same functional groups at Vienna is a cause for concern. For the other types of language services, namely, editing at all duty stations and verbatim reporting and copy preparation in New York, promotion to the P-5 level and in many cases to the P-4 level represents a difficult career goal and is inaccessible to the majority of the junior staff. Finally, the small size of the language units at the smaller duty stations, Nairobi and the regional commissions further limits career development possibilities. As indicated in paragraphs 19 to 23 above, improving the mobility of staff between language functions and duty stations is one way to alleviate the problem. Another approach is more flexible administration of staffing tables at all duty stations.

27. In the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001, the responsibilities of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services includes not only language and meeting services carried out at Headquarters, but also those carried out by the conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva and at the United Nations Office at Vienna. Accordingly, staffing tables and related financial provisions were made for all three conference centres under one section of the budget (sect. 1B, General Assembly affairs and conference services). Logically, consideration should be given at some point to the

establishment of procedures that would facilitate the transfer of posts and of staff between the conference centres under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Such a change would require careful study, however, given the need to recognize that administrative authority for conference services in the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna is shared with the respective Directors-General, and to comply with the principle recalled by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/208 B that the numbers and grade levels of staff should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization. Once established for the three conference centres, the modalities for central administration of the staffing tables for language services could be gradually extended to Nairobi and the regional commissions. Eventually, language staff at all locations would be considered part of a Secretariat-wide occupational pool within which their career development could be considerably enhanced.

IV. Conclusion

28. On the basis of the present analysis of career development problems in language services, it is possible to identify a number of actions that could be taken by the Secretariat to improve career prospects for language staff. First, it is proposed that in the context of the preparation of the 2002–2003 budget, starting in the year 2000, a comprehensive review of the grading of language posts at all duty stations be undertaken, with a view to determining those instances where a clear case for upgrading could be made, subject to overall budgetary policy. In addition, in the area of non-budgetary measures, further efforts will be made to facilitate increased mobility of language staff between functions and between duty stations. This will entail, *inter alia*, the organization of common examinations for the recruitment of English and French editors, translators and verbatim reporters in 2000, and continued consultations with the Office of Human Resources Management to consider modalities for a limited system of managed reassignment to duty stations away from Headquarters. In addition, discussions between the senior management of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna could be held in order to promote greater flexibility and coordination in the administration of staffing tables for language services at the three larger conference centres of the Organization.

29. Motivation of staff is probably one of the most important factors in the provision to Member States of quality services. In turn, the existence of satisfactory career development prospects is essential as an incentive for superior staff performance. Therefore, as requested by the General Assembly in paragraphs 29 and 30 of its resolution 53/208 B, increased attention will continue to be paid to career development, in line with the concerns for the enhancement of the quality of conference services expressed by the Assembly in the resolutions on pattern of conferences adopted over the past few years.

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MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY - PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 21 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a resolution adopted on 3 April 1999 by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as the text of the Declaration (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 64, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX I

Resolution adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly resolves:

1. To approve the Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex II);

2. To forward the text of this Declaration to the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the North Atlantic Assembly;

3. To take note of the fact that the Declaration was voted on and unanimously supported by parliamentary delegations from the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and Ukraine.

(Signed) E. S. STROEV
Chairman of the Council
of the Assembly

Saint Petersburg
3 April 1999

ANNEX II

Declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States concerning military operations by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),

Recognizing its shared responsibility for national security and global peace,

Perceiving military operations by the North Atlantic alliance in the territory of sovereign Yugoslavia, without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council, as a challenge to the current system of international relations, and a real threat to peace and stability in Europe and the world in general,

Expressing its deep concern at the risk of another cold war on the planet and of armed inter-State conflicts,

Calls on the parliaments and Governments of the States members of the North Atlantic Alliance to take immediate action to halt military operations in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a Member of the United Nations,

Considers that missiles and bombs cannot be used as arguments in addressing the complex problems of the modern world and that the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations must be observed, and, accordingly, supports the proposal of the Russian Federation to convene an emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly, and to include the item on the agenda of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE,

Calls on the leadership of Yugoslavia to do its utmost to settle the Kosovo conflict exclusively by peaceful means and on the basis of political dialogue.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of States members of CIS, acting as a consistent proponent of political settlement in situations of crisis, invites parliamentarians throughout the world to take the most resolute action to halt NATO military action and resume the process of negotiations within the framework of the Contact Group, for it is convinced that concerted efforts by the international community to establish peace in Yugoslavia will prevent further tragic developments that could have unpredictable consequences for humanity.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly supports the initiative of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus to propose that parliaments throughout the world designate the year 2000 as the Year of Concord and Consolidation of Good-neighbourliness, with a view to promoting peace, trade, economic, cultural and other international relations.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Agenda item 94
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 21 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information from the State Committee of the Russian Federation on environmental protection "On possible environmental consequences of the military aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Yugoslavia" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 94, and of the Security Council.

In view of the urgency of this issue, I would request you to take steps to have this document circulated as expeditiously as possible.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

Annex

State Committee of the Russian Federation on environmental protection: "Information on possible environmental consequences of the military aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Yugoslavia"

At present NATO is intensively bombing targets in Yugoslavia. While at the beginning of the aggression, military targets were involved, the targets of the bomb and missile strikes are now chemical plants, oil depots and oil refineries.

According to expert assessments, this is causing large-scale contamination of the environment by highly toxic substances, oil and oil products, and also the products of their combustion, which may lead to long-term adverse effects because of the degradation of the environment not only in the territory of Yugoslavia itself, but also in countries of the entire European region. As a result of the bombing of the oil refinery in Pančevo and of the "Petrokhemia" and "Azotara" chemical factories alone, large quantities of oil, oil products, products of their combustion, and also dangerous, harmful, explosive and highly inflammable substances, with long-term harmful effects - carcinogenic, mutagenic and teratogenic - have been released into the environment. The danger of perceptible global climate changes as a result of the significant discharges of soot and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere cannot be excluded.

It should be noted that because of the fires associated with the bombing of chemical facilities and oil refineries, there is a great danger of contamination of the environment by such products of combustion as dioxins, dioxin compounds and benzopyrene, which may be even more toxic than the products of the chemical factories themselves.

Thus, the toxicity of dioxin greatly exceeds the toxicity of military poisons (sarin, soman, tabun), cyanides, strychnine and curare. However, a basic capability of these compounds is their ability to accumulate in the environment and in living organisms. Dioxins, even in small concentrations, cause a suppression of the immune system. In higher concentrations, they cause mutagenic, embryotoxic and teratogenic effects, and have an adverse effect on the gene pool of the population, and of the plant and animal kingdoms. Contamination by dioxins was the reason for the massive damage in Viet Nam as a result of the use of dioxin-containing herbicides by the army of the United States of America and in Seveso (Italy) as a result of an accident at a chemical combine; contamination was also recorded in the state of Missouri (United States of America) and Japan (use of food products contaminated by dioxins).

Benzopyrene, which forms when oil products burn at low temperatures (for example, in fires at oil refineries and oil depots) is a very powerful carcinogen.

The deliberate bombing of environmentally hazardous targets and the growing scale of damage to the environment demonstrate that there is a transition from localized military action to the phase of large-scale environmental warfare. A paradox of the situation is that some of Yugoslavia's closest neighbours are

participating directly in the military action or expressing approval of it even though it is obvious that environmental disasters know no borders, and the territories of these countries are being exposed to the consequences of military action to the same extent as Yugoslavia itself.

The dispersal of toxins as a result of transboundary drift through the air may affect not only all the countries of Europe, but also States of the Middle East and North Africa. An example is the Chernobyl disaster, when the Swedes were the first in Europe to raise the alarm, and the "Chernobyl effect" was recorded even in Japan. That grim experience showed that the fallout of contaminated particles is not uniform, depending on the distance to the epicentre, but there may be areas of damage over a considerable distance (over 100 kilometres).

The incidents of accidental missile strikes into the territory of Macedonia and Albania show that there is a real risk of the destruction of nuclear targets, with disastrous consequences at the global level.

Two experimental nuclear reactors and a nuclear fuel facility are located 15 km. from the centre of Belgrade, there is an atomic power station in Slovenia, in the city of Krchko, and in the city of Lyublyana there is an experimental reactor. Within 300-600 km. from the zone of military action, in the territory of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, there are three operating atomic power stations, and in Italy there are four atomic power stations, that were shut down in 1990.

In the event of the destruction or disturbance of the operation of any nuclear reactor, caused by a hit by a cruise missile, an aerial bomb, the crash of an aircraft or a terrorist act, there could be an environmental disaster with serious radiological and socio-economic consequences for the population of all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, and also Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey and other European States adjoining the zone of military conflict.

The destruction of oil refineries and oil depots has led to oil overflows and spills into bodies of water, including the Danube. The contamination of waterways may spread to the territory of other adjoining States (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine).

It should also be noted that during the bomb and missile strikes on towns of Yugoslavia, sanitation structures and networks may be destroyed, which poses the threat of the outbreak and spread of epidemics, particularly in places where refugees have gathered.

The NATO countries, in bombing environmentally hazardous targets in Yugoslavia, are violating the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (Environment Convention of 1977), article 1.1 of which states: "Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to engage in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects as the means of destruction, damage or injury to any other State Party".

It should be noted that the provisions of a number of other international conventions and international declarations which restrict damage to the environment as a result of military action are also being violated:

World Charter for Nature, 1982, article 5: "Nature shall be secured against degradation caused by warfare or other hostile activities" and article 20: "Military activities damaging to nature shall be avoided";

Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment, 1972;

Convention for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (World Heritage Convention 1972), article 6, paragraph 3: "Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to take any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage ... situated on the territory of other States Parties to this Convention";

Protocol I additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, article 35, paragraph 3: "It is prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment".

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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Maintenance of international security – prevention of the violent disintegration of States

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Environment and sustainable development

Crime prevention and criminal justice

International drug control

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 16 April 1999 from the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan on Allied Cooperation for the Twenty-First Century, signed in Moscow on 16 April 1999 by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris N. Yeltsin, and the President of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Sh. Rakhmonov (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 20, 33, 64, 93, 94, 101, 102 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Rashid **Alimov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Tajikistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Sergey **Lavrov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
Russian Federation to the United Nations

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Annex

Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan on Allied Cooperation for the Twenty-First Century

The President of the Russian Federation and the President of Tajikistan,

Having thoroughly examined the current state of, and prospects for, the whole range of relations between the Russian Federation and Tajikistan,

On the basis of the historical close ties between Russia and Tajikistan, the traditions of good relations and interaction between the peoples of the two countries,

Convinced that the further strengthening of friendly relations, strategic partnership, alliance and mutually advantageous cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan is in keeping with the fundamental interests of the peoples of the two countries, and serves the cause of international peace and security,

Noting the importance and expedience of coordinated action in the international arena and close cooperation in the military and political fields,

Desiring to develop and improve cooperation to facilitate integration within the Commonwealth of Independent States, and abiding by the obligations arising from the participation of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan in the Commonwealth, as well as in the Customs Union,

Affirming their commitment to purposes and principles of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and other instruments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the universally recognized principles and norms of international law, and also international human rights standards,

Have agreed as follows:

1. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, are resolved steadfastly to preserve and strengthen the friendship between the peoples of the two countries. They shall base their relations on alliance and broad cooperation in a spirit of trust, guided by the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of State borders, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force or the threat of force, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual advantage.

The inviolable legal basis for the current and subsequent development and deepening of all-round ties and allied cooperation between the two fraternal peoples and States shall be the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of 25 May 1993.

2. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan note with satisfaction the significant progress on the difficult path to national reconciliation that has been achieved since the signing in Moscow on 27 June 1997 of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan.

The Russian Federation, as one of the States guarantors of the Agreement, having consistently advocated the unconditional and full implementation by the Parties of their obligations, shall continue to provide the necessary support for the peace process and to this end shall actively cooperate with the other guarantor countries and organizations on a bilateral basis and in international efforts, including efforts carried out through the United

Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with a view to ensuring the consistent implementation of the Agreement.

3. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan, which hold identical or similar positions regarding pressing international problems, shall deepen their constructive and systemic interaction in the area of foreign policy, both on a bilateral basis and within the framework of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and other international and regional organizations and forums in order to strengthen peace, stability and security at the regional and global levels.

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall coordinate their foreign-policy activities with a view to carrying out, when the need arises, joint or concerted action to strengthen security in the Central Asian region. The Parties believe that the United Nations is the principal body for maintaining international peace and security while at the time the importance of regional structures in the settlement and prevention of inter-ethnic, religious and other conflicts, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, is increasing.

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan, shall jointly take all available steps to eliminate threats to the security of the Parties, giving precedence to political and diplomatic means.

4. The Parties shall cooperate actively in the area of joint defence within the framework of common military and strategic objectives based on the Treaty on Collective Security of 15 May 1992. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan believe that the extension of the Treaty is an important means of guaranteeing the security of the States parties.

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall develop cooperation in the military and technical sphere on a mutually acceptable basis.

5. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall continue cooperation with respect to the safeguarding of their borders, optimizing the forms and scope of such cooperation in the light of the prevailing situation.

6. An important area for the development of relations between the Russian Federation and Tajikistan is the intensification of cooperation between the law-enforcement agencies of the two countries, including in such fields as counteracting illegal traffic in narcotic drugs, weapons and munitions, combating organized crime, terrorism and extremism, and also in other areas of law enforcement that are of mutual interest.

7. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan attach paramount importance to increasing mutually advantageous economic cooperation.

To this end, the Parties shall, on the basis of the principle of mutual advantage, promote the maximum development of cooperation, primarily in the areas of non-ferrous metallurgy, the chemical and light industries, mechanical engineering, the agro-industrial complex, transport and transport infrastructure, implementation of joint investment projects, including attraction of extrabudgetary sources, formation of transnational financial and industrial groups, joint enterprises and other institutional and economic structures, taking into account mutual interests; improvement of the mechanism for regulating and stimulating foreign economic ties, including direct ties between subjects of the Russian Federation and administrative and territorial divisions of the Republic of Tajikistan, as well as between business enterprises.

The stable development of bilateral relations in this area will be facilitated by the drafting of a programme of economic cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan for the short term.

8. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall work consistently to improve the Commonwealth of Independent States with a view to maximizing the effectiveness of its integration potential with strict respect for the interests of all States parties, developing multifaceted cooperation within the framework of the Customs Union and the Treaty on Deepening Integration in the Economic and Humanitarian Fields of 29 March 1996.

9. Considering environmental safety to be one of their most important tasks, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall, in keeping with their international obligations and national legislation, encourage cooperation in this area through an exchange of experience in the rational use of natural resources, introduction of clean technologies and implementation of measures to protect and preserve the environment.

The Parties shall encourage scientific organizations of the two countries to participate in research and to draft and implement recommendations concerning ways of rehabilitating Lake Sarez.

10. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall guarantee to their citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, equal rights and freedoms without any discrimination whatsoever. They believe that ethnic Russians residing in the multinational Republic of Tajikistan, and ethnic Tajiks residing in the multinational Russian Federation, are organic parts of the societies of the Russian Federation and Tajikistan and can help bring the two countries closer together and improve friendly relations between them.

11. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan shall contribute in every way possible to the preservation of the spiritual and cultural affinities of the two countries, deepen mutual ties in the fields of culture, science, public health services, education and information, promote the establishment of direct ties between organizations and people active in the areas of culture and art, and between research centres, educational institutions and the mass media.

The Parties shall encourage the harmonization of their national education systems through the maintenance of a common educational and intellectual area, including the development of joint curricula for undergraduate students and pupils, the training and retraining of specialists, the awarding of equivalency diplomas and the conferment of degrees and titles.

Special importance will be given to support for the activities of the Russian-Tajik (Slavic) University in Dushanbe.

12. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan are convinced that the twenty-first century will open for the peoples of their two countries broad prospects for allied cooperation and the intensification of ties in all fields in the interests of the all-round development of their national economies and cultures, lasting peace, stability and guaranteed security in the Central Asian region and throughout the world.

DONE at Moscow on 16 April 1999.

(*Signed*) B. **Yeltsin**
President of the Russian Federation

(*Signed*) E. **Rakhmonov**
President of the Republic of Tajikistan

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QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF
THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER
ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 23 April 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to bring to your attention the recent decision by the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, on Thursday, 22 April 1999, to issue closure orders against offices at the Orient House in East Jerusalem.

This dangerous and provocative decision is not only a provocation against the Palestinian people, it is also a gross violation of international law and United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as of the agreements reached between the two parties. In this context, I would like to refer to the letter sent by Mr. Peres, then the Israeli Foreign Minister, to Mr. Holst, the Foreign Minister of Norway, which confirmed that, as part of the agreements, "the Palestinian institutions of East Jerusalem and the interests and well-being of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem are of great importance and will be preserved. Therefore, all the Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, including social, economic, educational and cultural, and the holy Christian and Muslim places, are performing an essential task for the Palestinian population. Needless to say, we will not hamper their activities".

The United Nations Security Council has adopted numerous resolutions reaffirming the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem. Specifically, the Security Council has adopted sixteen resolutions regarding Jerusalem and has repeatedly declared that all measures and arrangements taken by Israel, the occupying Power, aimed at changing the legal status, demographic composition and

character of the city are null and void and without any legal validity whatsoever.

Such continuing provocative actions and measures are illegal under international law and undermine and violate the principles of the Middle East peace process. The Security Council, as the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, is under the obligation to take appropriate measures in this regard to protect the already frail peace process.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 39, 40 and 84, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Marwan JILANI
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY – PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

LETTER DATED 23 APRIL 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement dated 23 April 1999 by an official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the question of the settlement of the crisis in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as soon as possible as official documents of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36 and 64, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

Annex

Statement by an official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is consistently following the policy established by Mr. B. N. Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, for the earliest achievement of a political settlement of the Kosovo crisis on a just and lasting basis. This work is being conducted through many channels – from high-level bilateral contacts and mediation missions to wide-ranging activity in the area of multilateral diplomacy and the activation of the capabilities for the establishment of peace in the Balkans of those international organizations of which the Russian Federation is a member.

A key place in this process is held by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), within the framework of which, over the past quarter of a century, special instruments have been developed for cooperation in crisis situations. One of them – the mechanism for consultations and cooperation with regard to unusual military activity, envisaged by the Vienna document of 1994, has already been activated by Belarus in connection with the aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the Balkans. While commending and supporting this step by Minsk, the Russian Federation, for its part, in accordance with the mechanism for consultations and cooperation with regard to emergency situations adopted at the first meeting of the council of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Berlin in 1991, sent official enquiries to the NATO member countries on 21 April 1999. These enquiries note, in particular, the overt, flagrant and unceasing violation by the North Atlantic treaty countries of at least seven of the ten basic principles of international relations laid down in the Helsinki Final Act. They include the principles of sovereign equality and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty; refraining from the threat of use of force; territorial integrity of States; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; respect for human rights; and fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.

Indeed, it is impossible to find any justification under international law for the NATO strikes. The Russian Federation regards the force applied against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in circumvention of the generally recognized and imperative norms of international law, as aggression giving rise to consequences of responsibility. The references made by representatives of NATO and member States of the alliance to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, to "intervention in order to overcome a humanitarian disaster", "resistance to the policy of genocide" and so forth, are far-fetched, and any serious analysis immediately rules out any correlation between them and the legal norms and practice of international relations, above all the Charter of the United Nations, and decisions and obligations within the framework of OSCE.

The course of events in Yugoslavia since 24 March 1999 has shown that it is actually the military actions of NATO which provoked the current humanitarian disaster and created a full-fledged emergency situation in the Balkans. The Russian Federation demands that NATO should stop, and should remember its

obligations, and the moral, ethical and democratic values which we all agreed to respect and observe as the foundations for the building of a new Europe in the twenty-first century – peaceful, democratic, prosperous and free of any boundaries. We hope that within the 48 hour deadline envisaged in the Berlin mechanism the addressees will give an adequate response. We believe that this enquiry will give members of the alliance a chance to reconsider their actions and revert in practice to the observance of the norms and principles of international law.

The launching on 23 April 1999 of the OSCE mechanism for the human dimension should give significant political impetus in the same direction. In accordance with the final document of the Vienna meeting of the representatives of States members of CSCE in 1986, the Russian Federation sent the NATO countries a declaration and a request for information in connection with the massive violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and also of the humanitarian obligations deriving from the decisions and agreements adopted within the framework of CSCE/OSCE, committed by NATO, its members, officials and military personnel in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Specific reference was made to the incidents of the destruction by NATO combat aircraft of a passenger train on 12 April and of two convoys of Albanian refugees on 14 April, causing the deaths of dozens of people. This, like the deliberate NATO strikes on targets in which civilians are present, is in flagrant violation of article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". The arguments put forward in the alliance about human casualties as "unavoidable collateral damage" are unacceptable, cynical and amoral. Who in NATO determined the limits of this "collateral damage"? – do such limits exist for the alliance at all?

The enquiries refer to specific international documents and establish their violation by the NATO members as a result of such actions as the systematic destruction of Yugoslav towns and population centres, and civilian dwellings, and the destruction of life-supporting, economic and environmental targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. All this may lead to a complete collapse of all life in Yugoslavia, and further suffering for the population, in the first place old people, women and children. At the same time, the material base and the conditions for the return of the refugees and displaced persons to their places of permanent residence are being destroyed, and yet it is precisely the solution of the refugee problem which is being touted as one of the main goals of the alliance.

The calls by the leaders of individual States of the alliance for the removal from power of the legitimately elected leadership of Yugoslavia are illegal and highly incendiary. The coverage in the mass media of the NATO States of the events in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is one-sided and biased, and the damage caused to that country is deliberately passed over in silence or minimized. At the same time radio and television transmitters in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are being systematically destroyed, in violation of the right freely to receive and disseminate information.

Finally – and this gives rise to particular concern – the militant calls by the NATO members to step up military action and carry on to a "victorious conclusion" are a flagrant violation of article 20, paragraph 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states: "Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law".

On the basis of these facts, and also of the agreement reached in OSCE at the summit level, that is to say with the participation of the heads of State and Government of the NATO countries, that those who violate international humanitarian law shall bear personal responsibility for their actions, the Russian Federation has requested information on what responsibility has been borne or will be borne by persons directly or indirectly involved in the above-mentioned violations. We expect the NATO countries to provide their assessments of civilian casualties resulting from the actions of the alliance, and of the damage to the economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We would also like to know what measures the NATO members intend to take, and when, to stop and correct the overt, flagrant and continuing violation of the obligations they have undertaken, and how they plan to compensate for the economic and other damage to Yugoslavia and its citizens after the halting of military action against this sovereign member State of OSCE.

We note once again: the Kosovo crisis, like any other similar situations, cannot be resolved by methods using force. Violence engenders violence. The achievement of lasting and just peace in the twenty-first century is possible only by peaceful means, through patient, painstaking and, if necessary, protracted political and diplomatic work. This is the goal of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, and we call on all the other members of the international community to support it.

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MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY - PREVENTION OF THE VIOLENT DISINTEGRATION OF STATES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 14 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach the texts of the statements issued on 25 March and 7 April 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba in connection with the aggression by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 64 and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Bruno RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

[Original: Spanish]

Statement issued on 25 March 1999 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba on the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia

After a number of painful and much-manipulated political events, lengthy armed clashes and complex and non-transparent negotiations on the Kosovo issue, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) finally launched its announced brutal air attack on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose peoples were those that fought most heroically in Europe against the Nazi hordes in the Second World War.

This action, intended to "punish the Yugoslav Government", is being conducted outside of the United Nations Security Council, where the United States of America, as primary promoter of the aggression, would have had to face opposition from other members who, from the very beginning, have strongly opposed any action which would infringe on the prerogatives granted to that body by the Charter of the United Nations in order to guarantee international peace and security and which, by so doing, would entail a violation of the principles and norms of international law.

The war launched by NATO rekindles mankind's justifiable fears of the development of an outrageous unipolarity, ruled by a warmongering Empire self-appointed as a global police force and capable of dragging its political and military allies into the most insane actions, as was the case at the beginning and during the first half of this century with the creation of warlike blocs that swept Europe with destruction, death and poverty, dividing and weakening it while the United States strengthened its economic, political and military might.

It might be wondered whether the use and abuse of force will solve the world's problems and protect the human rights of the innocent people now dying under the missiles and bombs falling on a small country in a learned, civilized Europe.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba strongly condemns this United States-led NATO aggression against Yugoslavia and denounces the dark plots which have led to the continued prevalence of such uncivilized practices in the international political arena as a means of promoting the interests of those who persist in imposing their will on every State of the planet in the name of a new, ignominious world order created in its image and likeness.

At this time of grief and pain for the peoples of Yugoslavia, Cuba calls on the international community to mobilize its efforts to put an immediate end to this unjustified aggression and to prevent a further, even more regrettable loss of innocent lives, in order to allow this nation to resume the peaceful path of negotiating a solution to its internal problems, a matter solely and exclusively dependent on the sovereign will and self-determination of the Yugoslav peoples.

Cuba is concerned that the aggression may cause the conflict to spread unpredictably to other States of the region as a result of both the expansion of violence and its disturbing social and human consequences.

The ridiculous effort to impose solutions by force is incompatible with any civilized reasoning and with the basic principles of international law. The tough stance of those who try to justify this new crime is merely a reflection of the moral incapacity to accommodate ideas and policies, which go against their own interests, of the peoples involved in the conflict and the desire to impose the imperial will on them. Pursuit of this policy could lead to an unpredictable outcome for Europe and for all of humankind.

Annex II

[Original: Spanish]

Statement issued on 7 April 1999 by the Government of Cuba

Various views wrongly attributed to the Cuban Government have been disseminated with regard to the United States announcement of its decision to house Kosovar refugees in the territory of the Guantánamo Naval Base. It must therefore be made clear that such views are strictly personal.

The Government of Cuba has made absolutely no public statement on the issue.

From the very beginning, the Cuban Government's position has been totally different from what has been published. Bearing in mind that such a sensitive issue should be handled with all due discretion, it has refrained from making its views public.

In order to prevent useless misunderstandings regarding our country's position, we shall limit ourselves at present to stating the following:

From the moment that the current crisis broke out in Yugoslavia and NATO embarked on its brutal air strikes on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Cuba has strictly followed a principled policy of forceful condemnation of the aggression.

Within the limits of its modest capacities and without any desire for publicity or an active role, Cuba has remained convinced that the Serbs would stand up to the devastating attack by NATO; that no weapons system would be able to crush the resistance of those who, assailed from air and land but supported by their people, were willing to fight to the end, using adequate tactics to confront modern military technology; that they had already proved their bravery and fighting ability against the Nazi hordes during the Second World War; and that NATO had embarked on a course that would lead to an endless struggle and an unjustifiable, useless genocide in the very heart of Europe which the public opinion of that continent, and of the world, would not tolerate.

In every case, we have also conveyed to the appropriate persons our belief that the combat which had been initiated could be resolved only through political, rather than military, means and that, in view of the geographic and other realities, it was only through non-conventional (i.e., nuclear) weapons, whose use was inconceivable, that military support could be provided to Serbia from abroad.

Each passing day has demonstrated the validity of the Cuban position.

The first great tragedy, following the air strike unleashed against Yugoslavia on the night of 24 March and the immediate aggravation of the Kosovo conflict, was the massive exodus of the civilian population which the media have revealed to the world.

Hundreds of thousands of people, including children, the elderly, women and men, are already suffering the consequences of the fighting visibly and dramatically, and millions of other civilians in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro have been living for the past two weeks in fear of the deafening explosions, destruction, fires and inevitable loss of human lives, both civilian and military, from the rain of bombs and missiles falling from all sides on the remainder of what was, until a few years ago, the prosperous, united Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.

The mid-winter destruction of a thermoelectric plant that supplied electricity and heat to a million people and the assaults on similar facilities which provide vital services to the entire population are far from being a military objective and are becoming a case of genocide.

This statement in no way seeks to establish responsibility for what is happening or for the events leading thereto.

The innocent victims, whatever their nationality, ethnic group or religion, should receive every assistance both within and outside of Yugoslavia. Cuba resolutely supports such humanitarian aid, whatever the source. It will make no objection to, and is even willing to cooperate in, such efforts, wherever necessary, to the extent of its means.

Cuba supports with equal determination the urgent search for a reasonable, just solution to the conflict.

The war should end before the occurrence of even greater human, economic, political and military disasters of benefit to no one in the world.

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A/53/926
S/1999/477
26 April 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 19
ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Application of the Republic of Kiribati for admission to membership in the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 135 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and rule 59 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to circulate herewith the application of the Republic of Kiribati for admission to membership in the United Nations, contained in a letter dated 14 April 1999 from the President of the Republic of Kiribati to the Secretary-General.

ANNEX

Letter dated 14 April 1999 from the President of the Republic of Kiribati to the Secretary-General

In accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, and with those of rule 58 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and rule 134 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kiribati and in my capacity as Beretitenti (President) of the Republic of Kiribati, to request the admission of the Republic of Kiribati as a Member of the United Nations.

I would accordingly be grateful if you would arrange for this application to be placed before the Security Council and the General Assembly for their consideration.

For this purpose, the attached declaration is made in pursuance of rule 58 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and rule 134 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Teburoro TITO
Beretitenti (President)

Declaration

In relation to the request for admission of the Republic of Kiribati as a Member of the United Nations, I have the honour to declare, in the name of the Republic of Kiribati and in my capacity as Head of Government of the Republic, that the Republic of Kiribati accepts the obligations set out in the Charter of the United Nations and solemnly undertakes to fulfil them.

(Signed) Teburoro TITO
Beretitenti (President)

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Fifty-fourth year

Application of the Republic of Nauru for admission to membership in the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 135 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and rule 59 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to circulate herewith the application of the Republic of Nauru for admission to membership in the United Nations, contained in a letter dated 16 April 1999 from the President and Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of Nauru to the Secretary-General.

ANNEX

Letter dated 16 April 1999 from the President and Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of Nauru to the Secretary-General

In accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, and with those of rule 58 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and rule 134 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour and am duly authorized, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Nauru, to request the admission of the Republic of Nauru as a Member of the United Nations.

I would accordingly be grateful if you would arrange for this application to be placed before the Security Council and the General Assembly for their consideration.

For this purpose, the attached declaration is made in pursuance of rule 58 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and rule 134 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Bernard DOWIYOGO
President and Minister
for External Affairs

Declaration

In connection with the application by the Republic of Nauru for membership in the United Nations,

And in accordance with the requirements contained in rule 58 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and rule 134 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly,

I, Bernard Dowiyogo, have the honour and am duly authorized, on behalf of the Republic of Nauru, to declare that the Republic of Nauru accepts the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations and solemnly undertakes to fulfil them.

(Signed) Bernard DOWIYOGO
President and Minister
for External Affairs